NOVEMBER 2015 A.S L

The Rapier Issue

THE BARONY OF DRAGONSSPINE

Meiassis Dragon

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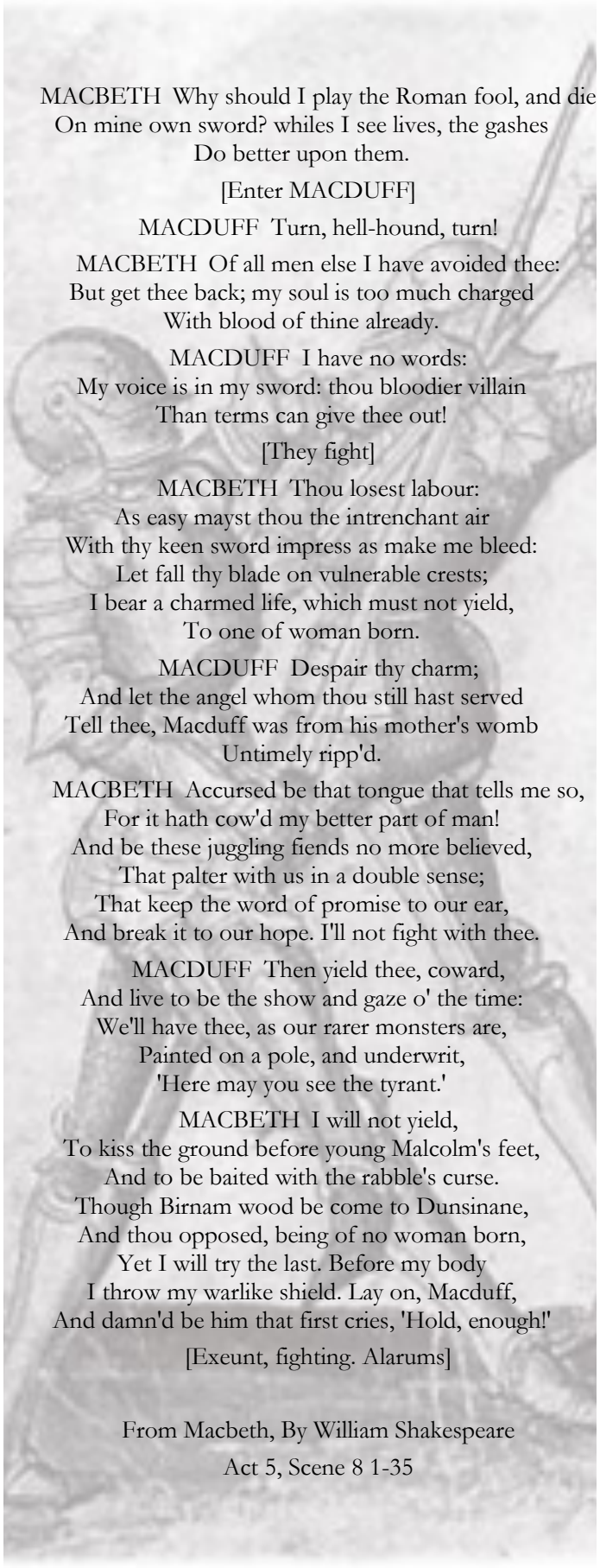


MACBETH Why should I play the Roman fool, and die
On mine own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes
Do better upon them.

[Enter MACDUFF]

MACDUFF Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACBETH Of all men else I have avoided thee:
But get thee back; my soul is too much charged
With blood of thine already.

MACDUFF I have no words:
My voice is in my sword: thou bloodier villain
Than terms can give thee out!

[They fight]

MACBETH Thou losest labour:
As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air
With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed:
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield,
To one of woman born.

MACDUFF Despair thy charm;
And let the angel whom thou still hast served
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

MACBETH Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow'd my better part of man!
And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACDUFF Then yield thee, coward,
And live to be the show and gaze o' the time:
We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
Painted on a pole, and underwrit,
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

MACBETH I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last. Before my body
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

[Exeunt, fighting. Alarums]

From Macbeth, By William Shakespeare

Act 5, Scene 8 1-35

Upcoming Events

November 2015		
7	al-Barran	Day of A&S
7	Dragonsspine	Dragonsspine Baronial Arts & Sciences
7	Bofharrach	Brewers Feast
14	Fontaine dans Sable	Coronation
14	Middle	Known World Academy of the Rapier / Known World Co
15	Fontaine dans Sable	Fontaine Toy Box
December 2015		
5	Windkeep	Hunters Feast
5	Dragonsspine	Gypsy Christmas
12	Caer Galen	Caer Galen Midwinter
19-20	al-Barran	Midwinter and War Practice
January 2016		
2	Caerthe	Caerthen 12th Night
9	Citadel of the Southern Pass	12th Night and War Practice
16	Aarquelle	Viking Vinter Vonderlandt
16	Fontaine dans Sable	12th Night
23	Plattefordham	Candlemas
30	Dragonsspine	Candlemas
February 2016		
6	Caerthe	Tri-Baronial A&S
13	Aarquelle	As You Wish: Boys & Girls Club Fundraiser
March 2016		
12	Citadel of the Southern Pass	Crown Tournament
May 2016		
14-15	Aarquelle	Coronation
June 2016		
3-5	Dragonsspine	Champions
17-27	Society	SCA 50th Year Celebration
23-26	Plattefordham	Northern Realm War

October Business Meeting Minutes

StagsCon: Please register if you are attending. There will be a free breakfast and lunch so they can get a good head count. If you are an officer and cannot go, please contact your Kingdom officer.

Baronial A&S: Please let Lydia know if you are going to be attending. There are currently 5 entries for champion. There is a research and a display portion of the day. Please talk to Lydia with any questions.

Gypsy Christmas:

At American Legion Hall. December 5. No outside alcohol. If you have any items for the auction please see Madame Adelaisa.

Baron: Gold key has been passed on to Eulasaid. If you need gold key, or have gold key to return, please see Eulasaid.

Seneschal: If you need me, please contact me at giannisanger-mano@yahoo.com. Please do not use Facebook for official communication. I hardly check it. We will address social media policy next month. If you would like to hold a small event or tourney that is acceptable. Feel free to coordinate using the dates we currently have as well. Especially if these events do not become official (i.e. on the Kingdom calendar) events. These should still be on the Baronial calendar and you should contact the seneschal to avoid conflicts. His Majesty has put into Kingdom Law that any past landed B&B will be referred to as "Your Honor." as a term of respect. Past landed B&B from Outlands will also receive an Augmentation of Arms that is yet to be decided upon.

Exchequer: We have money. Donations are down so please feed the box. Our bank account balance will be dropping unless donations increase. It was suggested that we mention during fighter practice a suggested donation. There will be some discussion on moving dance practice because if dance practice is cancelled we are still paying for the site.

Quartermaster: The shed repairs are proceeding under Sir Lothar's guidance.

Arts and Sciences: We have A&S coming up.

Knight Marshal: We have moved back inside for fighter practice. We had a lot of people attend. Food and drink cannot be on the stage in any quantity. Please wear shoes that do not scuff the floor, heavy don't go to your knees unless you are wearing plastic. Please control children and keep them off the fighting floor. Children are not to be unaccompanied in the hallways. Please keep in mind we can use the parking lot for practice as well if you want the space.

Rapier Marshal: Everything is moving forward. We are hosting a tourney once a month.

Archery: All is good.

Minster of the Lists: Nothing to report.

Herald: We are inputting 3 devices/names this month on April 30.

Chronicler: The next issue will be out shortly. The theme for the issue is "Period thought." The November issue will be on the subject of Rapier. Articles from people we know will be written by Don Antoine and Sir Michalengo. If you have anything you would like to contribute please talk to Madame Adelaisa.

Website: We are still working on the website. We are working on a permanent solution. Please continue to use alternate emails instead of the dragonsspine.org email until we clear the line.

Old Business: The form for UCCS has been resubmitted, and we are likely to be approved as an official group.

New business: Duchess Selene is putting a bid in for May Day.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Event Announcements

By: Lady of Bree Bye of Caer Galen

Caerthen 12th Night, January 2, 2016 – A Night in Muscovy
Adams County Fairgrounds, Brighton, CO
Hours: 9 am to 9 pm

Come, traveler, come in from the cold! Enjoy the warmth of Caerthen hospitality as we visit the Russian land. Enjoy delicious food, rich garb, dancing and song. More details as we get closer to the day.

Event Stewards: Master Johann and Mistress Kseniya
Feast Stewards: Lady Elaisse and Lady Isabella

Please email the Feast Stewards with allergen questions/ restrictions NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 15, 2015

Fees:

Adult Site is $12/$15 at the door
Child Site fee: 6 and under free
Children 7 to 12: $5
Site fee includes lunch prepared by Lady Elaisse
Non-member surcharge of $5 applies

Feast (Limited to the first 100 paid reservations):
$10/adult
$5/child
Children 6 and under free, but please register your child so the Feast
Stewards have an accurate count

FEAST RESERVATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 15, 2015. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Make checks payable to SCA-Caerthe. Send reservations to:

Lori Abrams-Flohr (THLady Hannah d↵Avila)
17910 E Dickenson Place
Aurora, CO 80013

Menu: (subject to availability, cost, and decision of the Feast Stewards):

On the Table:
Breads: Assorted
Butters: Plain and herb
Pickled veggies: assorted
Pickled herring

First Remove:
Roasted Beet Borscht
Cabbage Slaw
Pirogies

Second Remove:
Chicken w/ walnut, cilantro, and sour cream sauce
Green Bean Salad
Skewered Beef

Dessert:
Assorted Russian Cookies
Another dessert TBD

Coronation Information

Outlands Fall Coronation Schedule

Saturday 11/14/15

9:00 - Site Opens

10 - 11:00 Final Court of Tam and Kathryn

15 minute intermission

11:45 - 12:30 Coronation Court of Bela V and Anna

12:45 List for the Queen's Favor Tournament Opens (Heavies)

Landed Nobles Meeting

1:15 Queen's Favor Tournament Begins (Heavies)

2:00 - 2:30 Kingdom Officers Meeting

Battlemoor VII open forum discussion meeting

2:30 - 3:00 Crown, Seneschal and Exchequer Meeting

Battlemoor VII open forum discussion meeting

4:00 - 4:45 Chivalry Circle *immediately following the Queen's Favor Tournament*

4:45 - 5:15 Private Battlemoor VII Meeting with the Crown

5:15 - 6:00 - First court of Bela V and Anna

6:00 - Feast and Performances of the Windhover Bard Finalists

8:00 - Site Closes

Sunday 11/15/15

9:00am - Site Opens

9:00 - 9:45 - Pelican Circle

List opens for the Protector of the Queen's Heart Opens (Rapier)

List for the Queen's Defender Opens (Cut and Thrust)

9:45 - 10:30 - Laurel Circle

10:30 - 11:30 - Protector of the Queen's Heart Tournament Begins (Rapier)

11:30 - 12:00 - Queen's Defender Tournament Begins (Cut and Thrust)

12:00pm -OoD Circle

Lunch

List for the Defender of the Children Opens

List for the Protector of the Children Opens

12:30 - Fontaine dans Sable Baronial Court

1 - 2:00 - Protector of the Children Begins (Rapier)

Defender of the Children Tournament Begins (Heavies)

4:00 - Fontaine dans Sable Baronial Court

5:00 - Site Closes

Greetings!

Their Royal Majesties, Tam and Kathryn, invite one and all to witness the Coronation of Their Heirs, Bela and Anna, as the successors to The Stag Throne.

Join us on Saturday, November 14th for a day full of friendship, merriment and a catered feast fit for a King!

There will be several meetings throughout the day as well as the tournament for the Honorary Royal Retinue position of The Queen's Favor (Heavies).

Please bring your feast gear and drinking vessel and let the Barony of Fontaine dans Sable do the rest.

There are limited feasts available, so please let THL Isabella di Francesco Ambrosini to make your reservations soon!

Stay with us on Sunday, November 15th for Fontaine's Toy Box!

The traditions of Coronation will continue with tournaments for the Honorary Royal Retinue positions of Protector of the Queen's Heart (Rapier) and The Queen's Defender (Cut and Trust) as well as Peerage Circles.

The Barony of Fontaine dans Sable will also be hosting our Toy Box event that will include the festivities of a donation soup lunch, a trim sale from the Scatter Gold Largesse Guild of Fontaine, Tournaments for the Baronial positions of Defender of the Children (Heavies) and Protector of the Children (Rapier), an A&S display as well as a dessert competition (Don't forget to bring your quarters)!

All donations and proceeds from this day will go to support the charity chosen by our populace which is Childhaven.

EVENT DETAILS:

Saturday, November 14, 2015

Pinion Hills Community Church
5101 N Dustin Ave.
Farmington, NM 87401
Site is dry

no dogs allowed

Smoking permitted in the parking lot only

Site Opens: 9:00am

Site Closes: 8:00pm

Site Fee:

Adult Site: $10; Adult Feast: $15

Children (ages 6-12) Site: $5; Children Feast: $10

Children (under age 5): Free

Family Cap: $80

$5 NMS

Make checks payable to "SCA, Inc. - Barony of Fontaine dans Sable"

FEAST DETAILS:

House Salad (3 dressings)

Fettuccini Alfredo

Grilled Chicken

Herb Roasted Pork Loin & Potatoes

Roasted Vegetables

Sunday, November 15, 2015

Minium Park

Main St. and Park Ave.

Aztec, NM 87410

Rapier Combat in the Society

By: Don Antoine deVallier

Rapier Combat in the Society
By: Don Antoinne deVallier

Rapier combat (aka fencing or light weapons fighting) has come a long way since the early days of the Society. It has roots in the modern competitive fencing, where the piste and white uniforms dominate. Foils, sabers, and epees were the blades of choice then, along with tennis shoes or knee-high moccasins for footwear. But in recent years we have seen a surge in Period study, with translations of the Masters such as diGrassi, Marrozo, and Fabris. The equipment has had a Renaisssance, as well, where we have safe, flexible, but resilient blades replicating true rapiers of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Side sword has come into its own, as well, pushing the "fencing" era to the mid-15th century under masters like Lippo Bartolomeo Dardi (founder of the Dardi School, one of the Bolognese masters, and the foundation of the lineage of Marrozo and Manciolino), and Hans Talhoffer and Johannes Liechtenauer (German masters of no little repute, whose instructions could be applied to armored combat, as well).

Most practices in recent memory have seen a large boost in rapier combatants, possibly due to the ease of entry into the sport (current rules allow as young as 14 to participate in the SCA; many mundane fencing schools cater to children as young as 5-years old), and the low impact on the body (contusions or worse do not tend to occur in rapier, though they are not rare). Thanks to the traditions of modern fencing, built upon the instructions of the past, learning to fight with a rapier is also very easy, with regimented lessons (drills) on everything from footwork to bladework, side weapons to grappling (though we currently do NOT have approved grappling rules in the SCA). And further, the equipment is actually very affordable, the most expensive pieces being a mask and your weapon.

The Society is based upon the noble ideals of the 13th-14th centuries: courtly graces, just actions, honest perseverance, and knightly combat; the "better parts of the Middle Ages." Rapier within Society, while coming later in Period, represents that resurgence of the noble virtues those of the Renaissance sought: grace, honor, skill. Combatants are generally acknowledged as fighting for Her Majesty's pleasure, and her honor as well as their own. Wherein our Armored brethren demonstrate the skill of the soldier, the knight, the steady shield defending the King and Kingdom, the Rapier is the defender of the Court, the wit and panache to titillate courtier and Crown alike.

Where once we played and frolicked "off site" (i.e.: the parking lots or somewhere out of sight of the main event), Rapier has truly become a part of this great Game we all participate in. It has opened doors to research and translations long sitting dusty and forgotten in some library stack. It has inspired delving into persona play of the great kingdoms of medieval Europe. But our work is not done. We must, now more than ever, step into roles of leadership and guidance. The Masters of the Period have treatise that apply not only to our aspect of combat, but that of our Armored friends. Where the lessons end, of rapier and dagger, cloak and buckler, line and counter, there begins in many a lesson on shield, spear, pole arm, longsword, great sword, even lance. It is no great secret our numbers are dropping off within the SCA, so perhaps now is that time for a Renaissance of our own; perhaps now is the time, like our Masters we emulate, where we look back upon what came before our time and recreate it, study it, renew it.

Thus, I charge you: share your knowledge, read the Masters, find your style, your niche, and share that. With other rapier combatants, with Armored combatants, with your friends, with your Baronies, with your Shires. Who knows, you may find more entrants for the rapier list at the next tourney, and you might find a desire to suit up in armor.

In Service,

Don Antoine deVallier

The Transition from Heavy to Rapier

By: Sir Michaelangelo Francesco di Genoa

The transition from Heavy to Rapier

By: Sir Michaelangelo Francesco di Genoa

Disclaimer: These are my experiences and opinions.

One of the things I've learned is the small similarities in mindset. We both train hard, we both keep out brains into the game. The basic rules are the same, but that's where the differences begin.

Cardio:

In heavy the fights are harder, more physical, more use of certain proactive muscles. But an out of shape fighter in heavy can still excel. Trained to gunfight, or rely on brute strength, you can overpower your opponent and barely break a sweat.

In Rapier, the cardio becomes more. Stance, the dance, the subtle movements, the lesser muscles, all are more prominent. Being out of shape, you tire easier and those reactions are slower. You find that different muscle groups take a beating from lack of use. You cant overpower your opponent, you get sloppy. A faster more keen opponent will take advantage of this and you will struggle.

The chess match:

In heavy you can do a lot from 3 feet away. From how they hold their shield, to their stance. A fight can take 2 seconds from a simple flat snap with a fake. It can also take longer when both fighters are of similar skill. An elite fighter will usually "smoke" a newer skilled one on the simple fact of training, time invested, and knowledge. You rarely see the oops, i got sloppy and he got lucky. When the later rounds happen, you see longer fights, but the chess match remains the same. From just out of range you can determine most of the fight by a quick visual. Skill still says that most of the time the best fighter will win on the odds. Usually the best of the best will always win.

In rapier, every fight is more mental. As a newer fencer I was able to get lucky more often. an elite fencer can be bested by a newer fencer just based on what we have to work with. The blocks are different, shots sneak in easier, underestimating your opponent is an easier thing to do. Skill level isn't as prevalent in the outcome of a fight. I by no means am elite. I'm average at best. But I am learning to evolve and that's my chess match. I feel my body stress more, so I adjust. When the fight begins, every

The Transition from Heavy to Rapier

option is open, and nothing can be taken for granted. That is probably the biggest observation I have. No one person is unbeatable.

Control:

In heavy we have armor that helps us absorb the hardest of shots. And skill on defense with shield or other weapons can also help diffuse the out of control. The learning curve is greater, and the armor standards greater due to the impact alone. Injuries are most common with massive bruises, concussion, and the rare joint/ broken bone. The leaning I'm seeing is how to get lighter and faster while still able to maintain safety. Or the lack of personal safety for those that believe they are good enough to block it (I used to be one of them).

In Rapier, control is harder to maintain and easier to lose. A miscalculation of an inch can be the difference between light, hard, too hard. A hip twist, a wrist flick, a head lean, all can mean the subtle difference in power given and taken. That and the fact that one wrong move can kill someone... trust me on this one, it almost happened to me. The injuries are less, I think. More pinpoint things like stingers, broken toes/ fingers, sprains. Bruises tend to be little and round. But the fear of blade breakage, actually injuring grievously and morbidly are in the mind more. Heavy crossovers need to think extra hard to maintain this.

Age:

We aren't getting younger. Think of it in baseball, a knuckleballer can last into their 40's, while that 100mph guy blows his elbow in 6 years. In football the kickers and quarterbacks are the oldest people, because they take the least punishment. But when they do its usually worse. Not touching hockey... they are all badass. Basketball, you change positions to keep longevity. Each game has its physical demands that cause decline with age. Without adapting, you cant stay competitive.

As my heavy days are in decline, I've found the new passion in rapier. I can take the experience to the rapier field, and battle awareness. I have to train my body different, as the rigors are different. The community is also different. Much more comradery, panache, and the language to each other.

This is just a small glimpse into it. These are my views, and from that my experience.

In Service to the dream

Sir Michaelangelo Francesco di Genoa

The Renaissance of the Sword

By: Lord Simon Fitz Tomas

The Renaissance of the Sword
by Lord Simon fitz Tomas

Numerous changes occurred in many aspects of European life starting in the 14th Century that transformed the "Dark Ages" into the "Renaissance". Some of the most profound changes of this era can be seen in that common medieval weapon: the sword. Swords changed not only in form, but also in ownership. The spreading of the sword through the non-noble classes was one of the key elements of Renaissance. The sword had been the exclusive property and right of the knightly class. It was used not just as a weapon, but often as a symbol of the power of feudalism. Knights were created by a ceremonial tap of the sword. Vassals swore fealty while touching their liege lord's blade. The armored knight with sword and shield still conjures images of the "Middle Ages". The renaissance of the sword reflects the changes of the time. Let us briefly examine the fundamental changes in the sword itself from the "Middle Ages" to the "Renaissance".

The military use of guns led to the first fundamental changes in the sword. As guns were used in battle more frequently, armorers made heavier armor. As the armor became heavier, warriors began to thrust into the weak points, like joints, instead of slashing uselessly across the thicker plates. Thus the sword changed in shape from a wide and short cutting weapon into a narrow and long thrusting weapon. These changes began in the late fourteenth century. Do not get the idea that this happened overnight, however. The rapier, itself, did not exist until nearly the middle of the sixteenth century and did not complete its development until late in the seventeenth century. The change from broad sword to rapier was a long process. The changes in the swords themselves were minor compared to the changes in their owners caused in the by the social upheaval of the "Renaissance".

The rise of towns and the merchant class together with the collapse of feudalism and the rise of mercenaries saw the sword spread to all but the poorest of men. By the early sixteenth century, sword-masters in Europe had begun teaching their students, both noble and merchant class "gentlemen", the fine art of cut and thrust swordplay. The existence of text books teaching swordplay, as well as laws concerning public dueling, would indicate that by 1550 the rapier was to be found on the hip of every man old enough to carry one. In fact, it is worth noting here that two of the members of William Shakespeare's Globe company were considered to be master swordsmen, Tarlton the comic and Christopher Sly. Their knowledge must have served them well upon the stage, as certainly there were members of their audiences who were schooled in swordplay as well. While changes in both the shape and owners of swords were pronounced, the most profound change was in its use.

From the first century until the twelfth century, the primary weapon of warfare in Europe was the sword. Roman legionaires carried them as did their "barbarian" adversaries. Charlemagne and his knights carried them as did their enemies. William the Conquerer (also known as William the Bastard depending upon which side of the conflict you were on) and his armies defeated Harold and the Saxons with the sword. This is not to say that other weapons were not used during these times, just that they were not as common as the sword. The dominance of the sword as the weapon of war led to its status as the symbol of the ruling classes. Changes in the art of war during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries led to the decline of the sword as a battlefield weapon. By the sixteenth century, the primary weapon of warfare had become the gun. While two-handed swords and their ilk remained as weapons of war, the classic sword fell in status to an accessory of dress. Indeed a proper sixteenth century gentleman without a sword was as under-dressed as a modern banker without a tie. When nearly everyone carried a weapon, fights were bound to happen. We will look into some of these fights in a later article.

A Few Practical Notes on the Construction of Rapier Armour

By: Mistress Nicolaa de Bracton of Leicester, O.L.

A Few Practical Notes on the Construction of Rapier Armour

by Mistress Nicolaa de Bracton of Leicester, O.L.

I've been making protective clothing for the rapier arts for nearly three years now, in that time outfitting nearly every fencer in my area, as well as doing loaner tunics; I'm currently sewing my fourth set of gear (by now, it's just a matter of fashion, rather than dissatisfaction with construction). I've even entered my rapier armour in our regional A&S (using the new Middle Kingdom rapier armour criteria), receiving a first for one piece and a second for another. I write this article in hopes of saving those of you contemplating making your first set of armour (or whoever's going to do it for you) a few headaches.

How does rapier armour differ from regular garb?

This is a loaded question. Looks-wise, the best rapier gear I've seen is indistinguishable from regular garb--until it is taken off. One of the wonderful advantages of our art is that we can still dress to the nines on the field, if this is our thing. However, precautions must be taken so that the gear still does what it's supposed to--protect the fencer--as well as being comfortable and durable.

Choice of fabric:

Think carefully on this one. The regulations specify four layers of middle/ heavyweight fabric (or "trigger", if they use that name in your part of the world). This is a guideline--not an absolute--it's not meant to restrict your choices of fabric. What I'd recommend is making up a "trigger test patch" of four layers of this fabric about six inches square, but only sewn on one edge. Take it with you into the fabric store. When you run across a promising fabric, you'll be able to compare it instantly with the standard. A lot of upholstery fabrics which make lovely armour may actually end up being equivalent to two layers of trigger; likewise, if you run across some cheap remnants in the remainder bin, you should instantly be able to figure out how much you'll need. But also pay attention to the properties of the fabric itself. For instance, not all upholstery materials are equal. Some are loosely woven and tend to ravel at the edges; others are tight as a drum and wouldn't unravel if a tactical nuclear missile exploded in them. For obvious reasons, the second makes more durable armour. Watch out for Scotch-guarding in these fabrics. You certainly don't need it, unless you plan to wear your gear during the monsoon season, and it does interfere somewhat with the way the fabric breathes.

You also need to keep an eye out on the strength of the fabric itself. I have seen seemingly strong, heavy fabrics tear to shreds after only a couple of wearings. Velveteens and corderoys are the most prone to this; if there's a problem, it'll usually show up after the first washing--which makes pre-washing vital. Be wary of anything on the bargain table, especially anything labelled "100% unknown fibres". Besides having the potential to be extremely uncomfortable if these fibres turn out to be synthetic, many "bargain table" fabrics are of inferior quality and may have odd quirks (one batch I bought had an odd, petroleum-like smell). However, if you've seen the fabric on the shelf in the store before at a regular price, and it appears to have been moved there because it's the end of the season or the colour is ugly, go for it.

Fibre choice is another important factor. Generally, cotton or a cotton blend is best, not only in terms of durability and comfort, but in terms of cost. Remember that all layers need not be of the same material. Also take into consideration where the gear will be worn, and how heavily. Rapier armour usually gets sweated in a lot, so you'll want something that's easy to wash and that will hold up under this kind of treatment. It's not a bad idea to consider making two sets of gear--one of basic, durable materials for practices and another for indoor tournaments and "dress" occasions.

Patterns

While Tudor, Spanish, Italian, Elizabethan, and Cavalier doublets and pants conform best with fencing's historical milieu, you can certainly make other styles as well (I've made a fencing cotehardie for a gentleman of my acquaintance). If you are on a budget, or want something to use until you figure out what you "really" want, you might try a tunic. Somewhat fancier, but very easy to make and very comfortable is a long (knee-length or longer) Eastern European or "Cossack" coat (a style which is actually contemporary with the fencing era). Just about any male style (and

A Few Practical Notes on the Construction of Rapier Armour

some female styles) can be adapted to fencing.

Construction modifications

How do you turn a regular pattern into one for rapier gear? The first is the most basic--make sure to take into consideration the extra layers. This means you should probably add a little extra room along all the seams; it's especially important to make the armscryes and wrist opening larger if they are close-fitting. Also take into consideration the effect heavier materials will have on the way the garment fits and moves. Most fencers I have talked to do not like to fence in tight-fitting sleeves--they especially need mobility around the shoulder joint. Tight sleeves which are fine for a regular-wear doublet may tear out quickly in one for fencing. Furthermore, tight sleeves are quite uncomfortable in hot, humid weather. Loose fitting sleeves are a Good Thing. Recently, I attempted to authorize in schlager wearing my splendid new Cavalier garb. I'd noticed the garb--more specifically, the fairly tight-fitting arms-- forced a few adjustments to my epee style, but nothing I couldn't work around. I'd never tried to fence schlager in the new garb. To my surprise and consternation, the garb was so restrictive in the upper arm area that it hindered me from handling the weapon effectively and was actually wearing me out. I was unsuccesful in my attempt. Two weeks later, I gave it a try in my usual Cossack coat and had no problems at all. The moral of the story? You should not sacrifice style for comfort--but if you plan ahead, you should not need to.

If you're making a doublet, check the waistline of your pattern. Many doublets have high waistlines because originally the breeches or slops were tied right into them; if you do not compensate for this somehow, you may end up with dangerously underprotected areas when you raise your arms. You can compensate by lowering the waistline somewhat, by adding skirting to the doublet, or by doing the historical thing and tying the two garments together. Remember also to make the neckhole bigger, so that a hood may be tucked in underneath.

Your next concern is the closures. It is perfectly possible to make regular button closures down the front--but don't forget to add a placket in behind them. Stitch down the placket so that if a sword should slip between two buttons, it will be stopped by a solid

A Few Practical Notes on the Construction of Rapier Armour

seam. Place your velcro or zipper or whatever on the other side. You can also adapt patterns so that the two front pieces overlap enough to be safe, or you can even make "underwear armour" which is designed to be worn under other clothing, so that it looks like you're fencing in a shirt and light jerkin.

Now, for the actual sewing. ALWAYS double-seam all seams for rapier gear, and it's not a bad idea to triple-seam in areas that are under stress, like the armscryes. Make sure when you seam that all layers are included in the seam. Sergers are terrific for rapier armour--but I'd still recommend straight-seaming after you've done your serging for extra strength. ALWAYS use good quality thread for rapier armour (not the 4/$1 cheap stuff--resist the temptation! It's worth it!) If your fabric is fraying a lot, invest in some Fraycheck. When it comes time to add any ornamentation, make sure it's tacked down solidly. (A warning: braid trim, unless it's actually braided like a pigtail, has a tendancy to unravel after a few pokes with a sword). If you're creative, you can produce fake slashes and such for doublets, but always take care to insure that there are no little holes where a blade could slip in.

While you're at it, take some scraps and make up a test swatch of the fabrics in the body of your garment. Might come in handy if someone ever wants to test your armour with a broken foil....

An addendum: Making an effective cloak for rapier

When making a cloak for the art of defence, you are trying to do two things at once: to make an attractive clothing accessory and to make an effective off-hand parrying device. Of these two goals, the second is most important. A fencing cloak which does not flow well or is either too light or too heavy is useless. Not all fabrics are suitable for a fencing cloak. After a fair bit of experimentation, I have found that the best combination for me is one layer of middleweight upholstery material (not too stiff) backed with a layer of middleweight cotton or bengalene. Along the circular outer edge, I attach upholstery cording--the nice fairly thick kind--for added weight; it also looks nice and makes the cloak flow well. I have found that the optimum length for a fencing cloak is about the length of the arm or slightly longer (which also makes it look nice if you actually wear it). Now, this combination might not work for you--but my cloak seems to get borrowed a lot! If you are able to, test drive potential cloak materials in the fabric store by giving them a shake or a swirl. Some fabrics just do not "flow" well. Remember also that if you've got your heart set on a particular fabric that's too light, you can always add a middle layer between the outer layer and the backing. A good cloak makes fencing this style a lot easier and a lot more effective, but everyone has different preferences. Be willing to experiment and find what works for you.

Good Luck!

To Make a Square Target in the Style of Marozzo or DiGrassi

By: Don Tivar Moondragon

To Make a Square Target in the Style of Marozzo or DiGrassi

by Don Tivar Moodragon

Marozzo's square target

I wanted a shield that would be the maximum legal size for Gulf War (453 square inches.) According to the marshallate, for a wavy shield, what is measured is the final size--the silhouette or footprint, if you will--not necessarily its total surface area.

I started with a large piece of heavy leather (about 12 ounce) from Tandy and some 3/4-inch bar stock from Home Depot. First I cut the bar stock into four pieces with a hacksaw, two bars 20.5 inches long, and two at 19 inches. Next I drilled a series of holes about 2.5 inches apart along the length of all four pieces, starting about 1/2 inch from the ends. Then, using a vise, an anvil and a hammer, I bent the 19-inch pieces into a curving W shape, to get the wavy effect. (Fig. 1) When finished, the curves were about 2.75 inches deep, and the bar from end to end was about 14 inches. Ideally the curved pieces should be identical, but if they're a little off, that's not a major problem.

Figure 1. Curved bar seen edge-on.

Next, I attached the two 20.5-inch pieces to the curved pieces to make a rectangular frame. (Fig. 2) (Note: I used rivets for most of this project, because I have a bunch of them. You could use small nuts and bolts instead, just be sure the bolts are fairly short so they aren't sticking out too far on the inside of the target.)

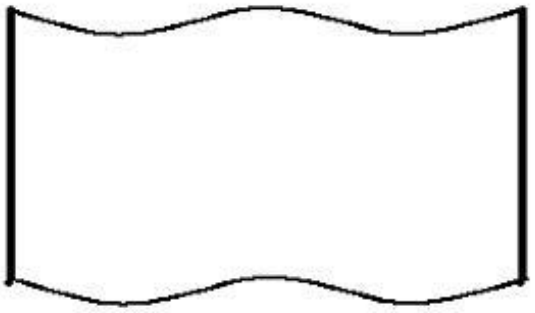


Figure 2. The basic metal frame

Once the frame was built, I cut the leather into a rectangle measuring 23.5 inches high and 21 inches wide. This allowed it to overlap the metal frame by about an inch on all four sides, so there is very little chance of the corners of the frame actually hitting someone. I soaked the leather thoroughly in water to make it soft and pliable, then started mounting it to the frame. (If you've never worked with leather, soaking it in this fashion makes it easy to form, and when it dries it will stay in the new shape.) Starting about an inch in from the edge of the leather and using the holes along one of the straight metal bars as guides, I drilled matching holes in the leather and riveted them together. (Fig. 3)

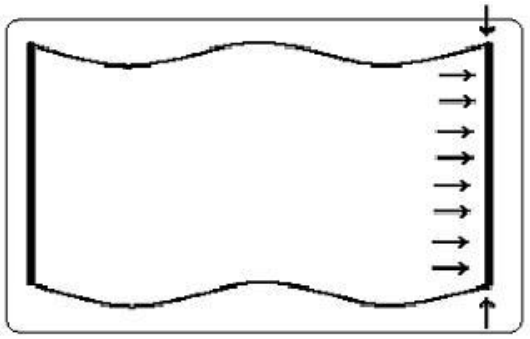
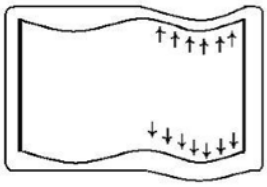


Figure 3. Rivet the leather to the metal bar at the indicated points.

Next I started attaching the leather to the curved pieces. To make sure the leather stayed flush with the frame, I drilled and riveted one hole at a time and alternated between the top curved piece and the bottom one. (Fig. 4) When both curves were done, (fig. 5) I drilled and riveted the leather to the remaining straight side.

To Make a Square Target in the Style of Marozzo or DiGrassi



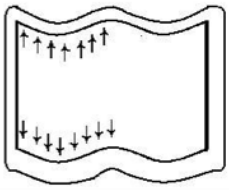


Figure 4. Riveting the first set of curves.
Figure 5. Riveting the second set of curves.

When I first built this target, I designed it to hang off my arm, like a typical armored combat shield. While this provided adequate body protection, I soon discovered that it wasn't anywhere near as mobile as I would like, so I took off the arm-mounting and built a center-grip instead. I am *much* happier with this design. The grip I use cannibalized the leather from the forearm strap. I cut it lengthwise into two pieces, soaked them to make them pliable and built a sort of twisted X -shape for the grip. (I was in a hurry and those were the materials immediately to hand.) This is the only part that is bolted instead of riveted. Alternatively you could build an I-shaped grip with some of the leftover pieces of 3/4-inch bar stock and a piece of wooden dowel and mount that in the center of the target. (Fig. 6)

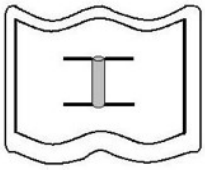
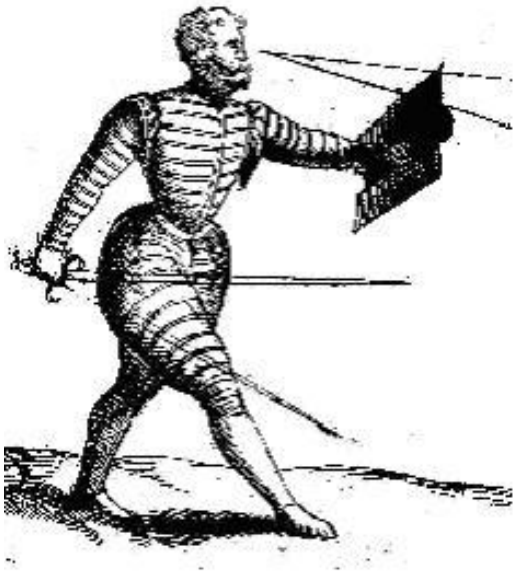


Figure 6. Center grip.

This target is fairly light (about 2 lbs) but quite sturdy. In practice, I've found that DiGrassi's suggested position of holding it at arm's length with the upper left corner highest and cocked slightly toward the opponent is quite practical. Incoming shots will either stop in one of the "valleys" or slide down and away to my left.



The finished size is 17 by 23.5 inches, which gives a footprint of 399.5 square inches. That's actually a bit smaller than the maximum size for Gulf War, but I'm happy with it. If I wanted to make the target wider it would be fairly easy to do so by flattening out the curved bars a bit. 23.5 by 19 inches would be the maximum legal size for this particular configuration.

The Styles of Swordplay

By: Lord Simon fitz Tomas

The Styles of Swordplay
by Lord Simon fitz Tomas

During the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, several different styles of sword fighting existed. The times and customs made the sword and swordplay almost common place. Schools and fraternities dedicated to the study of fencing sprang up all over Europe. Vast distances, both physical and political, made the spread of knowledge slow throughout the whole of Europe and so different styles of fighting developed in each country. Knowledge slowly spread and by the middle of the seventeenth century there were basically five styles of fencing. They are: the Old style, the Spanish style, the Italian style, the German style, and the French style. We will briefly examine each of them in turn.

The Old style was the basis of all other fencing styles. It was what remained of medieval sword fighting techniques. The weapons of this style were the dagger, the cutlass, the long sword, the 'hand-and-a-half' or 'bastard' sword, and the two-handed sword. The only defensive item employed with this style was the buckler, a small round shield that was held in the fighter's off hand. The Old style developed from the medieval arts of war with a single sword or a sword and shield. Using wider and heavier swords than the rapier, the Old style depended more upon physical strength than upon dexterity or finesse. It used a combination of attacks with the sharp edge of the blade (slashes), attacks with the flat of the blade (strikes), and attacks with the point of the blade (thrusts).

The Old style endured the longest in England. This is due, in part, to two factors that influenced the English strongly in the art of sword fighting: a book and a law. In 1599, a mercenary named George Silver wrote and published a book on sword fighting entitled Paradoxes of Defense. This book is a tirade against the rapier and foreign styles. It must have been well received by its audience since prior to this book's publication a law was written limiting the length of rapiers that were allowed on English soil. There is a case of a foreign diplomat running afoul of this law and having his blades broken to the proper length by the English authorities. Yet we cannot condemn the English for being non progressive as there were foreign fencing schools and masters teaching the other styles to any Englishman willing to learn.

The Spanish style was probably the first solid fencing style to develop from the Old style. Built upon medieval sword fighting techniques, it relied heavily upon almost full arm extension and footwork to keep the opponent at a set distance. The weapons utilized by the Spanish style were the long sword and the rapier. The style used no defensive tools; a single blade served as both offense and defense. It depended upon quick movements and used both the slash and the thrust as attacks. The slash was the stronger of the two attacks due to the distance kept between opponents.

The Spanish style has been described as "a complicated and mystical affair" due to its extensive use of geometry and its complicated "circle of defense" referenced by a French student of the style named Thibault. It is believed that the Spanish style developed from the teachings of alchemy that stressed perfection of the human form in all things. The difficulty in mastering the style, combined with the rigid laws and customs regarding dueling in Spain, meant that sword fighting did not become as popular in Spain as it did in the rest of Europe. Spanish sword masters and Italian merchants brought the Spanish style of fencing to Italy. The Italians incorporated some of the elements of the Spanish style into the style that they were developing.

The Italian style developed shortly after the Spanish style. It concentrated on the physical and mechanical points of swordplay, such as presenting the smallest possible target to the opponent and always keeping the tip of the blade pointed at the opponent. The weapons used in this style were the long sword, the rapier, and the foil, a long and thin blade with a sharp point and no edge. The defensive items utilized in the Italian style were the buckler and the baton, a cane like stick held in the off hand and used for parrying. Additionally, the Italians innovated the art of sword fighting by introducing the integration of attack and defense in both hands. This innovation was called Florentine fighting, after the city of its birth. Thus swordsmen using the Italian style often carried a dagger for use in their off hand. Some

The Styles of Swordplay

fought with two long blades. This style used two types of attacks: the thrust and the lunge. The lunge was another invention of the Italians, although at first it was basically just a running thrust.

The Italian style is the best documented of all of the styles, as instructional texts still exist written by such masters as DiGrassi, Agrippa, and Capo Ferro. The Italian style spread throughout Europe and influenced all of the other styles. The French style developed almost completely out of it. Additionally, the tenets of the Italian style are also, in a large part, the basis of modern epee and foil fencing.

The German style was developed in Germany and Eastern Europe (The Holy Roman Empire) at the same time the Italian style was being developed. Owing its origins to the Old style, the German style used a viscious system of slashes and cuts aimed at the upper torso and a box like system of parries. These attacks and defenses were based upon the moves that a man fighting from horseback would use. The weapons of the German style were long sword and saber. No defensive items were used in this style, although woodcuts would indicate that a secondary weapon, a sword or a dagger, was sometimes used. The style utilized three types of attacks: the slash, the strike, and the cut, a fast attack somewhere between a shallow thrust and a short slash.

Numerous German fencing texts from the period still exist. The style influenced cavalry fighting and sword fighting in warfare, such as it was in the period, throughout Europe. Much like the Spanish style, the German style emphasized keeping the opponent at a set distance. The style was spread across Europe by the landsneckt mercenaries. Finally, the modern techniques for saber fighting owe their beginnings to the German style.

The French style was the last to develop and was truly a synthesis of the best the other styles had to offer. This style stressed the use of strategy and thinking in combat to make every factor count for you and against your opponent. The style fully incorporated the Florentine method and combatants used long swords, foils, and rapiers for weapons. Defensive secondary items could be nearly anything: a dagger, a buckler, a baton, a cloak, a hat, a mug, a chair, etc. One of the most common secondaries was the dagger. A long daggers was developed for this purpose and took on a name of its own: the main gauche or left hand. The French style had three types of attacks: slashes, thrusts, and lunges.

In 1573, Henri Sainct Didier published the first book on the art of swordsmanship ever written in French. He is held by the French to be "father of their national science of arms", however his work is largely derivative of di Grassi and other Italian masters. The French style eventually achieved dominance over the other styles in the late 17th century. Today, it is the style of sword fighting that people identify with the rapier and The Three Musketeers. This is largely due to Hollywood of course. However, by the end of the 17th century, Paris was the home of numerous fencing schools.

By the 18th century fencing had basically begun to devolve into simply a sport. While duels still occurred in some places, more and more they were being fought with pistols instead of swords. For nearly all people the five distinct styles of swordplay that once existed in Europe have degenerated over time into only a general idea that once people fought with swords. Today, only a very few talented people keep the noble spirit and active study of classical fencing alive. In a future article I will describe some period duels as well as try to give you a feeling of what it is like to cross swords.

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- Lady Samantha Kennington
- Madame Adelaisa Bernois
- Lady Abigail MacNaught
- Lady Isabella Francesco
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- Master Thorsinn Vandringsmann

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- Lord Maxamillian Kern
- Lord Seamus McRay
- Lady Veronica Francesco

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- Rapier: Don Seamus McRay
- Archery: Bernard
- Shield of Chivalry: Lady Veronica Francesco

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- Madame Adelaisa Bernois

By: Lady of Bree Bye of Caer Galen

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